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*For Dr Bell
with the
Respect of the author*

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ADDRESS

TO THE

PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA,

ON

THE PRESENT DECLINE

OF THE

MEDICAL CHARACTER,

AND THE

MEANS OF ADVANCING

PROFESSIONAL RESPECTABILITY.



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ADDRESS.

To my Professional Brethren of Philadelphia.

GENTLEMEN,

The natural interest every generous individual must take in any measure calculated to advance or secure the credit of his profession, will, I am persuaded, justify a well meant effort to serve that to which I am attached. That it is quitting the eminence it lately held, is a melancholy truth our fondest desires cannot conceal, and it becomes us to inquire into the cause of this unfortunate change. to ascertain whether or not, it depends on circumstances under our control, and if possible, devise some plan to prevent its farther declension.

The great and extensive benefit of the healing art, the necessary qualifications, and vast responsibility of the physician, entitle the profession to the rank assigned to it by every en-

lightened community; but the late unhappy dissensions among its members, have, with causes to be developed in the course of these remarks, tended to diminish its character and restrict its benefits. A few years since, Europe looked with astonishment on the rapid improvement of medicine in this new world, and American physicians were the first to lessen the vast debt which science owed. Persevering endeavours to add to the stock of knowledge, and increase the resources of his art, strict integrity, an enlightened understanding, a dignified behaviour in society, and courtesy towards his brethren characterized the legitimate disciple of *Æsculapius*. No factitious claims were acknowledged, the pretensions of the boaster were doubted, the pride of station yielded to retiring merit, and intrigue disgraced only its author. The name of brother was not then an unmeaning word. All laboured as in a common cause, and every improvement in science was not merely an individual but a *general* benefit.

Much is yet required of our hands, but how sadly is the picture reversed. Assuming its functions, ignorance arrogates to itself the honours of this high office. The baleful weeds of empiricism begin to thrive. Each no longer considers the credit of the profession identified with his

own, but strives too often to elevate himself on its ruins, and by undervaluing the services of others, to magnify his own. Rudeness takes place of courtesy, condescension degenerates into meanness, politeness into sycophancy, senseless vacancy is mistaken for silent thoughtfulness, and upstart garrulity usurps the authority of hard-earned experience. Discord prevails, and unless we speedily harmonize, the title of physician will cease to be a promise of respect.

Shall it be thus? Shall the proud column raised in this western hemisphere by our illustrious predecessors be allowed to crumble? Shall we in our blind confusion squander their noble legacy? Hope whispers no. Your feelings answer no.

Let us then, I beseech you, consider the ultimate tendency of our present career, redeem, if possible, our sinking character, and by a well ordered course adorn our profession.

Perhaps the first step in the accomplishment of this end, would be a right understanding among us of the conduct proper under circumstances likely to occur. Unless the moral faculty of some be sadly depraved, we can easily agree on all points involving principle, but there are minor ones, to which universal consent, though desirable, can scarcely be expected. I shall,

however, submit a few considerations, which, if you approve, you can adopt, and to which you are earnestly requested to advance objections, if any you have, in the spirit in which they are offered. Before you proceed one step in their perusal, I warn you not to expect any thing new or ingenious. The plainest understanding must approve of the leading precepts, common sense must dictate the propriety of their observance; but, alas! their violation has been too frequent, and it is more my desire to persuade into a good old path unwisely deserted, than to open a new road.

FIRST.

Of the admission of Members.

Believing the introduction of unsuitable persons into the profession to be one great cause of its depreciation, I, in the first place, solicit the attention of those engaged in the honourable office of preparing others to undertake its arduous duties.

Deeply sensible of the importance of your task, you should conscientiously inquire whether the candidate possess the necessary prerequisites. If he betray any great intellectual or moral obliquity, or an ignorance of subordinate branches of education, discourage him.

If you find him qualified, apprise him of the difficulties he must encounter, for many choose the profession from the erroneous idea of its being of easy pursuit, become discouraged at the approach of unexpected obstacles, and either retire in disgust, or remain mere drones and loiterers in the work.

If he engage in preparation, keep constantly before him its final object. Let him not only enjoy your theoretical precepts, but also your practical teaching. Let him not only *hear* but *see*. Be not content to amuse him with the picture, but show him the reality. By neglect of this, many young men of respectable talents, have been deceived. Having acquired the best theories, and been *told* the most successful rules of practice, they advance with a confidence almost amounting to enthusiasm. But how mortifying is their discomfiture! At the first onset they find they must encounter an enemy that observes no established rule of combat. With the necessary weapons at their command, they strike not, for they know not the point of attack. Their knowledge avails not. They fear to blunder, and are doomed to yield without an effort, while the very confidence of the patient gives an additional sting to remorse already too severe. Then do not merely direct but guide. Not only

describe the road, but travel it with your young charge.

Those of you who hold the high rank of public teachers, and have the disposal of the first medical honour, should be unremitting in your exertions. Be not over anxious to please. If you possess the happy talent of uniting pleasure with instruction, exercise it; if not, remember, to convey the latter is your duty, and, it will procure you more lasting fame. As your labours are arduous, your reward should be liberal, and you should be content with the just emolument of your station, using no improper means to increase it. All who look to you for instruction, have equal claims, and all the time and attention you can devote, should be employed for their common improvement. You should undertake to instruct no more *privately*, than the nature and extent of your *practical* advantages will justify. Do not occupy in quizzing (as it is usually termed) intervals of time that could be more profitably spent in visits to the sick. This plan, besides injuring the student, betrays a spirit of monopoly unworthy the cultivators of a liberal art.

Encourage by all honourable means private instructors. They both profit the pupil, and increase the respectability and fame of a public

institution, for every additional opportunity of acquiring knowledge, has some influence. Besides, your countenance encourages individuals to strive for higher attainment, and thus advance professional worth.

There is no effort you can make, too great for the object. Pupils come to you from a great distance and at vast expense. Perhaps the hard earnings of a parent which could be ill spared from his scanty coffers, are yielded to you in high expectation. Perhaps the future interest of a whole family is at your disposal. He who calls you his preceptor, may be its only hope. Moreover, even the fate of an entire neighbourhood may hereafter hang on his practical success. How carefully then should you look to his improvement!

The last and most important office is the granting of medical honours, and affording the more direct passport to public confidence.

In your examinations for the degree of doctor of medicine, you should have no partialities or resentments to gratify. Exact a strict compliance with all the prescribed requisites, canvass well the merits of the candidate, and if you have objections state them, with all possible delicacy, at the proper time and place, otherwise you may so discourage him as to paralyze his

future efforts. If he is bound to present a medical dissertation, you are under equal obligations carefully and deliberately to read it. Want of time will be no excuse for allowing ignorance to pass, or injuring the credit and prospects of the applicant by hasty misconceptions. Expect not a mere reiteration of your own views, but rather cherish a spirit of inquiry. Allow no idle disputation, but give due weight to the arguments of your young opponent, and if his position is well sustained be not offended. Anger rouses resentment, and the vexation of being unkindly repulsed cannot easily be forgotten. Make no unfair exactions, for by these you forfeit your claim to future respect.

Finally, When you come to a decision, the man must be lost in the professor. The delicacy of friendship must not, by permitting you to smuggle pretenders into the list, impose on society, and undervalue the labours of the deserving candidate. Solid worth should be the only claim to notice, and this should be always acknowledged. Then would the diploma be a recommendation to favour, and a promise of usefulness, and the names of professors have, *at least*, the weight of their private testimony. Custom or tenderness will not exonerate the man from censure who can, in a public capacity,

bestow praise unsanctioned by his judgment, or whose pen will record what his tongue *dare* not utter.

SECONDLY.

Of Empiricism.

The next cause to which I would advert, as derogatory to the medical character, is the allowed progress of empiricism. As long as our art remains in its present state of imperfection, and disease continues so often to baffle the best directed efforts, the hope of the afflicted, and the credulity of the weak, will give some currency to the nostrums of ignorance and fraud. But when in any way, either indirect or positive, *we* appear to countenance them, feeble hope is kindled into expectation, imagination dethrones reason, and in the fleeting moment of delusion, testimony is afforded, which the fatal catastrophe soon falsifies. The road to fortune is now open; the newspapers teem with accounts of wonders never wrought, a high value is set on the *magnum donum*, and the croaking inventor and patentee swells into importance. I am well aware, that while some are ready to commit the fate of those on whom all their resources have been exhausted to the chances of *experimental blun-*

dering, many of our most respectable brethren think it necessary, in order to avoid the imputation of selfishness or illiberality, sometimes to encourage the use of unpromising remedies. But this requires some limitation. If any popular remedy is proposed, with the properties of which you are acquainted, and you think it consistent with the present safety of your patient, employ it; watch its effect, and if you find it salutary, candidly acknowledge your conviction, and persevere in its use. Even the strict attention to regimen, a patient often observes, while employing some inert article, to which his own fancy or the officiousness of neighbours led him, frequently accomplishes more than all the prescriptions of the physician. But you are bound to forbear sanctioning all unknown remedies, whether they owe their adoption to *direct inspiration, lucky dreams, the kindness of a stranger, the good nature of an Indian, or* THE NECESSITIES OF THE PROPRIETOR, whose strong ground of confidence is his want of acquaintance with medicine, and an entire ignorance of the delicate fabric he handles.

When these are proposed, it becomes your duty to state the probability of imposition, and the hazard of employing compounds prepared by unskilful hands. If, notwithstanding this,

your patient persist in his desire, acquiesce. Still, however, though he wander from you and venture on dangerous ground, do not desert him. If you perceive any injurious effect referable to the drug, interpose your authority, regardless of the vender's prediction of its being the harbinger of good. Even when the confidence of your patient is shaken, and he is ready to dispense with your professional advice, continue friendly visits, for after all his aberrations, he will look to you for the tender consolations of humanity, when the spell is broken and he sees the storm gathering thick around him.

Of the many cases which fall into the hands of the advertising quack, the recovery of some is to be expected, and whether there be a connexion between the cure and contrivance or not he will profit by every lucky incident, and, though you may be satisfied he cannot justly boast success, your mere unqualified admission of the fact will be made to serve his purpose, and his puff will very soon be ornamented with the imposing appendage "*Recommended by several physicians of this place, and elsewhere.*" Thus many are made to assist his fraud, who never believed in his miraculous powers.

In order therefore to limit, as much as possible, his depredations, avoid all direct intercourse with him. If you are invited to consult with him, refuse. This the safety of the patient requires, for your chance of success would be greatly diminished by his blind interference.—Many, by consenting to meet creatures of this order in the hope of instructing them, put implements into their hands which are afterwards mischievously applied, by their erring judgments.

Does any one assert that as the people will have their antidotes, and charms, their specifics and Panaceas 'tis useless to oppose them? Let him recur to the origin of these absurdities he now derides. By our profession they were conceived, and by us were they propagated, and however ridiculous many popular notions may now appear, they owe their existence, in the infancy of our science, to the profound cogitations of some learned doctors. Then think it not preposterous to attempt the substitution of more correct views, in place of errors of our own planting. Every enlightened physician must see its propriety, and if we once unite in the effort the fascinations of antiquity will soon vanish before the clear light of reason, modern *wonders in the healing art* will be found

of every day occurrence, and the chance cures of *inspired* ignorance be fairly estimated.

THIRDLY.

Of Etiquette.

In the third place, I would recommend a strict observance of etiquette towards brother practitioners. If we expect public regard, we must respect each other.

When you are called to consult with one of acknowledged skill, let no private feeling of animosity prevent your compliance, unless you find it so strong as to obscure your judgment; in which case indulge in no intemperate expressions, but state your objections in a calm dignified manner, avoiding any unnecessary detail calculated to prejudice the mind of the patient.

If you are already in attendance betray no unwillingness to have his opinion, but rather manifest a desire to give place to him, for a time. It may even be proper, sometimes, to furnish an account of the previous history and treatment of the case, either in writing, or through a third person. If his suggestions are good, adopt them. This proof of magnanimity, will secure for you the esteem of the virtuous and wise, *command* the respect of your

enemy, and if it do not conciliate his regard, will satisfy you of his unworthiness ; the bosom that can harbour ungenerous dislike, being destitute of genuine honesty, and totally incapable of real friendship.

When a professional meeting is appointed, be punctual in attendance. Examine the patient with as much attention, as you would if you alone were responsible. Observe strict secrecy in your after deliberations. If the person you are called to assist be your senior, do not take his opinions for granted, but, with becoming modesty, judge for yourselves ; If he be younger or less established in his profession, show him proper deference. Honour his office, if you cannot respect his years. Cold inattention to a junior, the assumed air of importance, the self-complacent smile of protection, catechetical mode of address, and dictatorial manner of advising, all indicate a weak mind, and are only practised by those whose pretensions to superiority are doubtful ; the man who is positive of his own excellence not fearing to have it disputed by those who witness his condescension.

When the *consulting* physician, approves of the plan of treatment instituted by the person first in attendance, he should never, from the

mere love of change, propose a remedy no better calculated to fulfil the indication, than the one already adopted. This is particularly improper at the first visit.

If any difference of opinion occur on points merely theoretical, be ready to waive your peculiar views, for theories apparently diverging, often lead to the same practical conclusion. If, however, you do not agree on the all-important matter of *treatment*, endeavour to divest yourselves of prejudice, and compare with candour adverse opinions. Be neither dogmatical, nor show that hasty submission to the reasoning, and ready acquiescence in the views of your opponent, always characteristic of imbecility. If solid conviction be the result of your debate, be not too proud to acknowledge it, if *not*, you cannot be expected to abandon ground you consider tenable. In this dilemma, you should refer the case to some one, in whose judgment both confide, and let his decision be final.

The attending physician should write all prescriptions, communicate all directions, and (except where the other is called for the purpose) perform all operations.

Neither the patient nor his friends, are to be made acquainted with any discordance of opin-

ion, that may have occurred in your private conference ; a knowledge of this being only calculated to lessen confidence in both. All must appear to be the effect of mutual agreement ; I, he, and they, must be obsolete words, and you must not say by whom any particular remedy was proposed.

Sometimes the urgency of the case, or the solicitude of friends requires you suddenly to visit the patient of another. Here, if absolutely necessary, prescribe without delay, but let it be distinctly understood you consider your services vicarious, and expect to give place to the person of their more deliberate choice. After *his* arrival continue only long enough, to furnish any requisite information or assistance. If his politeness or the gratitude of the patient, dictate an invitation for your return, do not impose on their courtesy, but repeat your visit only after a regular call. Decency makes the request proper, and modesty renders your hesitation equally necessary.

In your visits of friendship or civility, you will frequently be asked your opinion, of a case under the care of another. If you think it consistent with truth, declare your entire satisfaction with his views, and encourage a strict compliance with his advice ; if not, betray not, either

by word or *action*, any disapprobation. The doubting look, and portentous shrug, are even more unmanly than open censure.

If the petulance or impatience of the sick, betray them into unguarded expressions of distrust or dissatisfaction, honour forbids your taking any advantage of the circumstance. You are bound to endeavour to satisfy doubts and re-establish confidence, and if you cannot effect this laudable end, let not a repetition of the complaint pollute your breath. 'Though secrecy be not enjoined by the disaffected, the obligations of your profession impose it. Light not the torch of discord at the altar of suffering humanity.

If in any of your friendly calls, you find a brother practitioner in an error, remonstrate with him privately, and if you convince him, boast not, but be content with the satisfaction of well doing. If he persist, leave him to his own will, unless his mistake be so gross as to prove him unqualified for the important duty he has undertaken. In this latter case interference is justifiable ; and it might be proper to insist on a reference to a third person ; always, however concealing your suspicion from the patient or his friends.

If in any instance caprice or some slight mis-

understanding induce a patient abruptly to dismiss his physician, the successor may not be *bound* to inquire into the merits of the case, but should resent any unjust censure, or reprove any dishonourable insinuations. If it be in your power to reconcile differences, spare no exertion. Bearing in mind the sacred injunction, of *doing to others as we would they should do to us* ; employ every honourable effort to procure his restoration, and cheerfully retire before him. If you cannot effect this, ascertain from him that he considers himself finally discharged, and assure him of your own amicable disposition.

Sometimes the representations of patients are calculated to lead to a misconstruction of the conduct and motives of another practitioner. In such a case you should not betray any premature resentment. Have an interview, and endeavour to come to a right understanding with him, and, if his explanation do not even accord with the previous statement, credit him, unless he is evidently inconsistent.

When any dispute occurs between two practitioners, which their mutual explanations cannot reconcile, the opinion of a common friend should be taken, and if this fail of producing

the desired pacification, and a more general appeal is thought necessary, let it be strictly confined to the profession. A public exposure of real grievances seldom answers the purpose of the injured, while the rehearsal of fancied wrongs meets with ridicule. The world is too indifferent of individual concerns, to examine with care into the grounds of misunderstanding. Nor, indeed, is it always capable of a correct decision, none but men in the same profession, being qualified to appreciate the ground of difference. He that expects to fire the community with his indignation, however just, is in great danger of disappointment, for party feeling and prejudice will always weigh, and after all charging and rebutting, the previous standing of the parties will be made the leading question, and though both are degraded, injustice, if high handed or official, may prevail. Time will often effect, what haste may defeat. It is better therefore to wait its slow working than incur the hazard of adding mortification to injury.

FOURTHLY.

Of the mode of obtaining Medical Offices.

A laudable ambition will excite every man of dignified feeling or noble sentiment, to strive

for excellence, and induce him to value every honourable mean of professional advancement, as the road to that eminence, his superior talents, or higher merit, entitle him to hold. When such an individual finds an avenue to promotion open ; his serious inquiry is whether he is qualified to fill with credit to himself, and service to others, a post of honour, or profit. To possess an exalted station with inferior claims, he would never desire ; knowing full well, under such circumstances, elevation would be disgrace. Nor would the love of precedence ever induce him, to resort to any measure for its attainment, which the finest delicacy would not approve, or strict integrity warrant.

But there are inferior souls, who forgetting the true aim, make priority of place their measure of desert, and pant for its attainment, without seeming to consider that excellence alone can make it honourable. These know not how to make station respectable, by sterling merit. All they have learned, is to value *themselves* on it. Promotion is the just reward of merit, but can furnish no solid pretension to it.

What beauty can a mirror reflect, when deformity is placed before it ? What credit

can lofty situation give; to an unworthy incumbent?

When men of the latter description, start for eminence, they soon find the road of virtue, too steep and rugged ; turn off into the by path of intrigue and manoeuvre, seizing on any adventitious aid, unmindful of every thing but the attainment of their purpose.

“ A friend or brother, they defame,
And sooth, and flatter, those they hate.”

With them the end justifies the means, and no honourable competition can be expected. It is therefore not surprising, that in a contest so unequal, merit should be sometimes cast into the shade, and public favour be injudiciously bestowed. Here, however, the successful need not boast their ill-gained victory, nor the more deserving envy them, for the light these ephemera seek, will be their destruction.

The mouse may climb above the imprisoned elephant, or the ass assume the lion's skin, but a squeak or a bray must soon expose their low nature. Solid virtue can only *pity* towering meanness, and *despise* exalted demerit. Jealousy is a fault we should never be betrayed into by those who purchase advancement with dishonour. All we have to regret is the character they for a time give to the profession. Having reached

a height which renders their faults more conspicuous, they shamelessly indulge them, in the belief that they are above censure. Constant exhibition renders the picture more familiar, vice becomes less odious, dishonour loses its asperities, example soon palliates what virtue condemns, artifice and juggle grow fashionable, and many employ the false currency because unable to detect the imposture. What they desire they unhesitatingly seek, and precedent extenuates even guilt. It is sometimes inconvenient to recur to first principles, and custom is made the ready plea for their violation.

Thus, by a system of overreaching we are working our own ruin. But let me ask the man who owes his promotion to unfair management, where is his satisfaction? Can he enjoy his victory over a rival only less fortunate because less intriguing? Can he witness the downfall of his profession and plume himself on his own elevation? Can he find public regard withdrawing itself from him, and console himself with the thought that others are *more* dishonoured?

It is not my wish, however, to be understood as bestowing indiscriminate censure, even on those who deviate from the line of rectitude. There are doubtless honourable men, who, thinking it necessary to adopt the motto *do in*

Rome as Rome does, believe themselves justifiable in meeting their competitors on their own ground; but we fear too many, conscious of inferiority, plead custom, and pursue unmanly measures as their only hope of advancement. To the latter I have nothing to say—with them reproach or persuasion would be alike ineffectual—let them, if they can, glory in their own disgrace. The former will (I trust) gladly embrace a more honourable policy, and them solely I now address.

If, on the creation or vacancy of any place which you think yourselves qualified to fill, you determine to seek its attainment, make a fair and regular application, and if you have superior claims state them respectfully. Urge nothing with the earnestness of the suppliant, but show, by your independent, though polite manner, you deserve what you ask. Never condescend to the base trick of electioneering. To a noble mind obligation is always painful, but *who* that possesses one spark of generous sentiment can brook the thought of soliciting favour from those he lightly esteems? Every man, however humble his station, if he fill it with integrity, should be treated with respect; but mere moral rectitude cannot enable him to judge of intellectual worth, or scientific attainment. Now it

often happens, even where men strictly honest are preferred to the management of public institutions, that stupidity, or ignorance, or both, characterize the individual whose decision is to influence your fortune. Here you should possess too much real dignity to allow yourselves to urge claims where they cannot be appreciated, and thus acquire the reputation of empty braggarts. To boast superiority before men entirely unqualified to estimate medical pretensions is degrading; but to court, and compliment, and flatter, and importune those whom, under common circumstances you would be scarcely willing to recognize, is meanness in the very extreme. Whatever is reduced to the level of a mean capacity will be lightly valued. This course of office begging, and favour seeking, must therefore, defeat its object, for in this way preferment can only be bought by a sacrifice of character. Moreover, it is almost universally true, that rapid growth indicates speedy decay, and the man who rises into notice by a puff will soon find his airy height dangerous, and his support feeble.

Then do not, as you regard the interest of the profession, and your own ultimate advantage, follow the unworthy course. Let your acquirements be solid, your principles sound,

your resolution firm, your attention strict : In a word, make yourselves useful and necessary to the public, and wait the event. Your advancement may be slow, but it will be sure and lasting. The breath of popularity may be unpropitious for a time, but it cannot harm you. Even its reproaches will leave you spotless. The deep extending root makes no display, it grows unseen, and works almost unheeded, but when the storm gathers, it sustains the stately tree, and, if in the conflict its foliage is stripped, has power to renew its spreading beauties. When the elements are hushed, and the sky becomes serene, we admire the virtue that defied the blast, and the succeeding calm invigorates its strength, and develops new graces, while the solar warmth, but tends to wither the fallen honours of unrooted ambition.

Injured excellence *must* revive, but there is no redeeming principle in unmasked worthlessness.

FIFTHLY.

Behaviour towards Patients.

When your professional aid is solicited, no private misunderstanding should deter you from granting it. No imaginary slight should be made

the pretext even of a moment's hesitation; for while you pause to settle a trifling punctilio, the destroyer may complete his work. If you *know* you have been injured, prove in the hour of danger that you deserved better treatment; if the patient have seemed regardless of your feelings, show yourselves mindful of his safety. True manliness would scorn to resent an offence on a prostrate enemy, and heaven born charity invites to the noble satisfaction, of rewarding evil with good.

When you arrive at the scene of affliction indulge not a sickly sensibility, but evince, by your tender deportment, that familiarity with human anguish has not blunted the sympathies of your nature. Avoid all appearance of bustle and hurry, and endeavour under the most imperious circumstances, to be calm, collected, and deliberate. Once determined on your course act decisively; remembering all humanity can effect, depends on you. Be not offended at the embarrassments, the anxious solicitude, or even the unreasonable fears of the patient or his friends, may occasion. Both may seem to forget the deference they owe, and evince a disposition to interfere with your plans: But you should not resent at that moment, their well meant, though, ill judged,

suggestions. Neither indulge in angry invective, nor abandon your patient. Stand firm to your purpose while circumstances urge. When danger is over and alarm has subsided, you will generally receive the grateful acknowledgments of those, whose disquietude betrayed them into opposition. Even when the event is unpropitious, you will find satisfaction in having exercised forbearance.

When your opinion of a case is requested, do not give an undue importance to your services and create unnecessary alarm, by magnifying the danger, nor fall into the opposite error of inducing a false security.

Nor are you ever to create entire despondence ; your exertions should continue to the last moment, and a state of absolute despair, might altogether prevent a compliance with your orders, or paralyze the efforts of those on whom their execution depended. Though the faint rays of hope may be permitted to beam on the darkest prospect, they should not be lighted into expectation. Deceive not a dying man, lest his last accent declare his disappointment, and the cold breath of dissolution, be spent in accusations, which your own wounded conscience must acknowledge just.

To the interrogatories of friends you should give as plain and satisfactory answers as possi-

ble. You cannot expect your explanations to be well understood by the mass of people, even when you employ the most common language; much less when they are conveyed in technical and high sounding words, with which they are as little acquainted as with an unknown tongue.

When a consultation is requested, show a ready compliance. If you think it necessary for the safety of the patient or your own satisfaction, make the proposition yourself. If the alarm of friends urge them to ask it before you think circumstances require, be not displeased at the appearance of distrust, but remember their fears suggest what their cooler judgment would not dictate.

If, happily, you possess religion, neglect no suitable opportunity of urging its importance, or applying its truths, and when its solace is desired, be ready to present it. You may then adapt your conversation to the condition of your patient, prevent an interruption of your curative efforts, and contribute to wipe off the foul and, I would fain hope, unjust charge of infidelity, so generally attached to our profession. But if you are unqualified for this divine service, do not object to the visits of the pious. The frigid rules of human philosophy may teach us to bear with sullen fortitude the common ills of life, or meet with heartless submission the irrevocable sen-

tence "Dust to dust," but it is only for the sublime precepts of Christianity to inculcate holy resignation. The hallowed light of religion can alone brighten the gloomy prospect of the dark valley of death, and its cheering promises are the choicest opiate to sooth the last agony. By its sweet influence, the painful hesitation of uncertainty and trembling apprehensions of alarm are changed into joyous expectation. Faith points to bliss beyond the grave, and the glad-some hosanna is the last sound sent back to earth, as the heaven bound traveller embarks on the wide ocean of eternity. Then do not despise the advocates of a meek and humble Saviour, but permit them to unfold his glorious plan. Not that you should allow every gossiping enthusiast to harass the already troubled mind of your patient. Commit him to the care of enlightened, judicious piety—to one who, while he probes the depraved heart, and opens it to a sense of its unworthiness, has the balm of Christian consolation to offer; and who, while he warns of the danger of the dark abyss, can direct to the region of celestial beatitude.

Finally, In all your intercourse with the sick, be mild, forbearing, attentive and affable; equally avoiding to excite fear by austere reserve, or create disgust by rude familiarity. Be not con-

tent with the mere formality of prescribing, but when necessary be the friend, the comforter, and the nurse of your patient. If he be a stranger in a strange land, perform every kind office in your power. Remember he may have known the anxious care of parents and the soothing tenderness of friends, and now, while in painful separation the hearts of many are yearning after him, neglect may sink like a dagger in his breast. The remembrance of past attention may but aggravate the sting of present indifference, and grief and despair finish what disease essayed.

SIXTHLY.

Of Charges.

The appreciation of services, though it may seem to be an individual concern, has a great influence on the general character of the profession. If our time and attention must be occupied in relieving affliction, those who receive the benefit of our labours should acknowledge our claim to a suitable reward. But as we practise a liberal profession, we should not value our service by measure, nor number our visits as the merchant does his wares, and expect a like return from all. Our charities should be great and frequent; and, in order to enable us

to exercise them, our compensation should be proportionately liberal. Not that we should always expect a large fee, for there are many can only afford a moderate one, and if they can well spare this we are not to reject it. But we should fix for our common guidance the rates of charges; and when we make any deduction, let it be understood that it is in consideration of the patient's finances, and if these are very low, let our services be entirely gratuitous. Take not a pittance from the hard earnings of the poor. What if by persevering industry and a long course of self-denial, he may have treasured up a mite for us? Then is he more worthy our benevolence, and we should never allow his noble honesty to deprive him of the comforts, or perhaps the necessities of life.

If we desire the respect and confidence of our patients, we must not extort money from them by invention. Some from undue love of gain contrive to make those who ask their professional aid a double source of profit. Not content with a just compensation, they persuade, and sometimes force, (by employing private marks, and otherwise,) patients to purchase at an enormous price, medicines of their prescribing, either directly from themselves, or from some one with whom they have a secret under-

standing. Even where the afflicted are unable to afford a regular fee to their physician, and where he thinks it would be barefaced inhumanity to exact it, he sometimes has the cold barbarity to fix a high value on his prescription, and thus pinch from the hard hand of poverty the gain he would be thought to forego. It is not unusual to hear men of this cast accused of prescribing more largely and frequently than necessary; and, indeed, we must acknowledge there is at least a *semblance* of truth in the charge. It is perfectly correct for a physician to engage in any private concern that does not interfere with the proper discharge of his regular duties, or hazard the credit of his profession; but if he be interested in the vending of medicine, he must not incur the imputation of being mercenary and unjust, by monopolizing the profits of his own prescriptions.

SEVENTHLY.

Of the Advantages of Consolidation.

As there are many measures which for their enforcement require, not only implied consent, but a positive understanding among us; I would urge the necessity of our associating together, (as has been done in a neighbouring city) and

adopting rules, for our general government. There are many points that cannot otherwise be well observed, for the rules which one may have prescribed for himself, may allow more latitude than those of another. For instance, one may refuse to meet an empiric, while another in perfect consistence with his views of propriety, may consent. One may feel himself bound to decline all attendance on the patient of a brother physician, until he is either regularly called to meet him, or learn from him that he is fairly dismissed, while another may be satisfied with the assertion of the patient or his friends. One may acknowledge medical pretensions, which others may disregard. Some may think it proper to accept or even *ask* a situation, of which a worthy brother has been improperly deprived, while others may consider it highly dishonourable. Some may believe an offence against an individual member a general, others a mere private concern. Want of coincidence in these, and many other subjects, greatly diminishes the weight and respectability of the medical character. The strict etiquette of one, is often mistaken for foolish nicety, and the inattention of another, attributed to rudeness; and thus equally well meaning persons, sometimes misunder-

stand each other, accusation and recrimination follow: the public is troubled with their mutual complaint, and the general credit injured. If we would organize ourselves into a regular body, we could establish fixed principles of conduct, and when any violation occurred, all would know how to treat the offender. Then disputes might be referred to competent judges, and public appeals be rendered unnecessary. When a physician forfeited the respect of his brethren, all would concur in withholding it from him, and though his professional worth might be recognized, the general suspension of friendly intercourse would be ample punishment.—If one member were injured or slighted in a public way, the whole body would feel bound to resent it, and we would not then hail party feuds, or individual debasement, as opportunities for personal advancement.

There is one point that cannot be properly settled, but by common concurrence, and at this I have already hinted. I mean the rates of charges. To our disgrace we have now, among other matters to be gained at a low rate, *cheap doctors*. The poor consider the trifle they afford their physician, a full compensation, the rich reason from this, and resent what they term *extortion* when a fair demand is made, ap-

ply to another who, for fear of offence, measures his services by their narrow standard, thus justifying their censure, and becoming the plunderer of the field he ought to enrich. This should not be. Yield every thing to necessity, but nothing to avarice; and remember when we undervalue our own labours, we rob our profession.

In addition to the unanimity among ourselves likely to result, we would derive another great advantage from association. The public generally would cease to make unreasonable requests, and see the propriety of some nice observances they now condemn. Many things censured as private acts, would be approved when understood to result from common agreement. While individual conduct remained blameless the reputation of the profession would be pledged for its support, and our characters would cease to be at the mercy of every man who chooses to constitute himself judge, and whose reproaches we now justify by our constant bickering.

CONCLUSION.

An earnest solicitude for the interest of my profession prompted this address. I have not insisted on the general and essential qualities of

the gentleman to the formation of the medical character. These the physician should of course possess; for, without private worth and respectability, the highest intellectual attainments or greatest public service, cannot secure a lasting name to the individual, or credit to his profession.

I am sensible that while many necessary rules of conduct are entirely neglected, the few I have placed before you are very imperfectly discussed. But in my feeble judgment they were most important, though too seldom observed, and a favourable reception of this hasty sketch, may encourage at a future day the attempt at a more minute and better digested plan.

Many may be disposed to smile at some of my suggestions as visionary, and wish to remind me that it is less difficult to advise well than act correctly. I am no advocate for human infallibility, and cannot therefore answer for my own firmness. While we are the subjects of evil passions, private animosities must exist. But though we may expect often to feel resentment against individuals, we should all be willing to pledge ourselves, as far as in us lies, to consult the interest of our profession, acquiesce in any rules that may be properly instituted by it, and hold

ourselves liable to whatever discipline or censure a violation may merit.

If my observations could but have the effect of gaining your attention and exciting you to action, my purpose would be gained; but if apathy continue to prevail, I must console myself with the consciousness of the purity of my intentions, and though I fail in the execution rest satisfied the design is good.

